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ABSTRACT

The Action Socialization Experiences (ASE) presented in this guide are modified Outward Bound initiative tests developed at the New Jersey School of Conservation to be used as an introduction to group problem solving. The ASE process is described as follows: teachers are assigned a specific problem for a 2-hour period and briefed on techniques of supervision (e.g., the "problem" is explained only once); students in groups of 8-12 are told that as long as they adhere to the rules and safety procedures, they may do anything else they wish in an effort to solve the problem; teachers must insist that each group take a minimum of 1 minute to plan a course of action before attempting to solve the problem; after 15 minutes, a whistle blows and the groups rotate to another teacher and another problem so that each group experiences 4 to 6 problems within the 2-hour ASE time block. Included in this guide to ASE are: general guidelines for teachers and nine problem experiences defined in terms of grade level; situation description; equipment; problem; rules; safety procedure; possible solution; post-experience discussion suggestions; and alternate methods of problem solving. An exemplary problem is described as getting everyone over a log (12 inches in diameter and lashed between 2 trees about 6 feet above the ground) as quickly as possible. (JC)

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MONTCLAIR STATE COLLEGE
NEW JERSEY SCHOOL OF CONSERVATION
Branchville, New Jersey

ACTION SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES

at the

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL OF CONSERVATION

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Action Socialization Experiences are modified Outward Bound initiative tests which were developed at the New Jersey School of Conservation to be used as an introduction to group problem solving. These problems are carefully designed to help students collectively decide on a solution and then carry out their plan as quickly and efficiently as possible. Having successfully completed some of these problems on the first day of their outdoor experience, the students are better prepared to work in small groups in field sessions taught at the School of Conservation, such as water ecology, language and communication skills, orienteering, etc. After leaving the School of Conservation, students may find the problem solving techniques they were introduced to in ASE are useable in other situations. Environmental problems tend to be so complex that group effort is often necessary to develop intelligent solutions. The first page of the appendix makes some comparisons of the relationship of ASE to environmental action.

ASE's are jointly run by the Staff of the School in residence and a School of Conservation staff member. Prior to the start of ASE's, the School of Conservation staff member assigns each assisting teacher a specific problem for the entire two hour period and briefs them on techniques of supervision. ASE's are designed to develop listening skills, and for that reason the teacher in charge of each station briefly explains each problem only once. Students in groups of 8-12 are told that as long as they adhere to the rules and safety procedure they may do anything else they wish. This opens a wide range of possible approaches to the problem solution and students must determine the approach which best takes into account the strengths and weaknesses of their group. Problem not considered solved until all members of the group have participated. Students are often so anxious to get started on a problem that they do not want to take the time to think it through and discuss possible alternatives with other members of the group. Therefore, teachers must insist that the group take a minimum of one minute to plan their course of action before attempting to solve the problem. After fifteen minutes a whistle is blown and the group rotates to the next teacher and problem so that each group experiences four to six problems within ASE time block.

While the students are actively involved in solving the problem, the teacher has many responsibilities. The most important concern is to be sure that the situation is safe! This may mean that teachers have to "spot" students in certain situations. (See specific guidelines for each problem.) When a group is having difficulty, teachers should not repeat the directions, but they may subtlely encourage members of the group to help each other more. It is most important for teacher to resist impulse to tell students what to do. Students should be encouraged to decide for themselves what the best course of action is. Near the end of the time period alotted for each problem, a teacher should take a few minutes to discuss how the group performed. Since the major goal of the experience is socialization, the concept of teamwork is most important. Some questions which might be valuable in stimulating this discussion are: 1. How many students offered suggestions in the planning period? 2. Did anyone take over in a leadership capacity? 3. Did all students work at the task? Did students help each other? How much encouragement did individuals give to other members of their group? How much arguing and fighting went on? It is most valuable to have students evaluate their own teamwork to determine whether or not they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and more importantly whether or not they will try to overcome their shortcomings in subsequent problems.

Sometimes a score sheet is used to keep track of each group's progress (see page 2 of appendix). In scoring, four points are awarded for successful completion

of the task, and up to six additional points are awarded for teamwork. Naturally, this evaluation is quite subjective, but it is often interesting to check each teacher's evaluation to determine which groups improved as they did more problems. If a group finishes a problem before time is called it is interesting and valuable to have them evaluate their problem solving skills and suggest the number of points they think they deserve.

General Guidelines for Teachers

1. Familiarize yourself with the station you will be running. Memorize the rules and the exact wording of the problem statement. If you can make up a story that makes the problem more interesting, so much the better.

2. Collect any necessary equipment from the SOC staff member in charge of the Action Socialization Experience.

3. When a group arrives at your station, state the problem once--clearly and slowly. DO NOT repeat any information.

4. Resist the impulse to help the students by telling them what to do.

5. Give the students one minute planning time before they try anything.

6. When evaluating the group, don't forget to take into account such things as listening skills, following directions, discussing and helping with the evaluation, etc.

7. Send your group on to the next station as soon as signal is given.

Quicksand (grade 3 and above)

Description - Students are stranded on an island (a pile of rocks) surrounded by quicksand (wood chips). A rope with a loop in the bottom end attached to a tree will swing from the island to the edge of the quicksand. A large bar of gold (log) is placed on the island.

Equipment - A swing rope attached high in a tree, a pile of rocks or dirt for an island, a section of log 10" diameter, 2' to 3' long.

Problem - To get everyone in the group and the bar of gold off the island as quickly as possible.

Rules - 1. If a person or the bar of gold falls in the quicksand, everyone must return to the island.
2. Students returning to the island must go to the back so that those students who have not had a turn get to go.

Safety Procedure - 1. Pushing and shoving while on the island will not be tolerated.
2. If the bar of gold is tied to the rope, warn students to stay out of its path when it is swinging.

Possible Solution - Stronger members of the group hold onto the rope and swing across. Students with less arm strength may be aided by attaching the bar of gold to the rope. The bar of gold is then used as an aid to help swing across.

Discussion Afterwards - 1. How is it possible to help someone who does not have sufficient arm strength to swing across?
2. What did you feel like if you got across safely and then someone fell in causing you to return to the island?

Alternate Methods - 1. Swing across two at a time.
2. Make the landing area off to the side so that students must swing in an arc.

Nitro (grade 5 and above)

Description - The Nitro (a bucket filled with water) is used in conjunction with the Confidence Course (a set of log and rope obstacles--see material on Confidence Course.)

Equipment - A Number 10 can filled with water and an extra gallon jug of water.

Problem - Transport the nitro around the obstacles as quickly as possible.

Rules - 1. The nitro must start and finish at the fixed balance log near the slanted ladder.
2. Every person must handle the nitro at least once.
3. If the nitro spills, the bucket must be taken back to the starting point.
4. If you are touching the nitro bucket, you may not be touching the ground at the same time.

Safety Procedure - The nitro bucket must not be held in the teeth.

Possible Solution - Students station themselves at various points along the bridge and pass the bucket from one to the other. Most of the students fail to realize that some obstacles are more difficult than others and may require more people to get the nitro across. Students standing on the ground may help a person standing on an obstacle who is holding the nitro.

Discussion Afterwards - 1. If the nitro bucket never got to the obstacle you were on, how did you help?
2. Did you effectively help other people, or were you concerned only about your obstacle?

Reverse (grade 6 and above)

Description - A 20-ft. long log at least 12" in diameter is lying on the ground. The area around the log has been cleared.

Problem - Students line up along side the log and count off. Students get up on the log in numerical order. The problem is complete when they have changed positions on the log so that their numerical order is reversed.

Rules - If anyone's body or clothing touches the ground, all students must return to their original position and start again.

Safety Procedure - Students are not permitted to push or shove while on the log.

Possible Solution - Students sit on the log spacing themselves about 1 foot apart. The first student stands up and steps over the second person balancing himself by holding the hand of the person he is stepping over and bracing himself with a with a stick placed on the ground.

Discussion Afterward - 1. How could you have more effectively helped people go past you?

2. How could you have helped other people when they were not near you?

Alternate Methods - 1. Aids may not be used to help balance on the log.
2. Students must stand on the log the entire time.

Team on a T-Shirt (grade 3 and above)

Description - A sturdy piece of cloth is placed on the ground in an open area.

Equipment - A piece of cloth about the size of a large T-shirt

Problem - To get everyone standing on the T-shirt at one time so that no one is touching the ground.

Rules - Everyone must be on the T-shirt for 10 seconds without touching the ground.

Discussion Afterward - 1. Did you have to experiment with more than one method before finding the correct solution?

2. Did it bother anyone to be so close to other people?

Alternate Method - Fold the T-shirt in half.

Maze (grade 3 and above)

Description - The maze is a large area bounded by rope tied to trees. The rope is approximately 4 feet above the ground. At one end of the maze there is an opening through which the students must exit.

Equipment - 1 blindfold for every student in the group.

Problem - Blindfolded students must find their way out of the maze. Once one student has found the exit, he/she may take off his/her blindfold and, remaining near the exit, verbally direct the others out.

Rules - 1. Students may not duck under nor may they step over any ropes.
2. Students may not take off their blindfolds until they are told that they are out of the maze.

Getting Students Ready - Group the students together in an area where they cannot see the maze. State the problem and the rules. Give one minute of planning time. Then have the students blindfold themselves. When blindfolds are in place, students hold onto the shoulders of the person in front and the person in charge leads the group into the maze by ducking them under the outside boundary rope. Once all students are within the maze, the person in charge tells them they may begin.

Safety Procedure - The adult in charge should not allow students to run while blindfolded.

Possible Solution - Students follow the rope which forms the outer boundary. Spreading out rather than trying to keep the group together usually results in the fastest exit.

Discussion Afterward - 1. Did the first person out effectively help the others get out?

2. What kinds of directions were used? Were they effective?
3. When most of the students have gotten out, should they all shout directions, or should only one or two people give directions while the others remain quiet? Why?

Beam (grade 3 and above)

Description - The beam is a 12" diameter log lashed between two trees approximately 6' above the ground.

Problem - To get everyone over the beam as quickly as possible.

Rules - 1. Trees and other structures used to support the beam may not be touched.
2. Rocks, logs or other materials may not be used as aids in getting over the beam.
3. Once a person is over the beam and touching the ground on the opposite side, he may not help anyone else over.

Safety Procedure - 1. The adult in charge stands under the beam opposite the students and spots each student going over.
2. Students should not kick their feet as they are being boosted over.
3. Students should move out of the landing area as quickly as possible.

Possible Solution - Students boost each other going two at a time if possible. The next to the last person sits on top of the beam and extends his/her hand down to help pull the last person over.

Discussion Afterward - 1. Were some people afraid to try getting over? How could you help them?

2. Everyone except the last person must have his/her hand in his/her pocket the entire time.

Stretcher Carry (grade 5 and above)

Description - The stretcher is to be made from two poles approximately 2 inches in diameter and 7 feet long, plus any other non-living materials available.

Problem - To construct a stretcher which will be used to lift and transport a person who is suspected to have an upper leg fracture. The stretcher bearers must transport their victim over a narrow, rocky trail at least 200 yards long.

Rules - 1. The leg must be immobilized before the person is placed on the stretcher.
2. No more than 6 people may carry the stretcher at any one time, but everyone must carry the stretcher for at least 1 minute.
3. The group will be evaluated on the basis of how well the stretcher was constructed and how gently the victim was handled.

Safety Precautions - 1. The adult in charge should carefully inspect the stretcher before it is loaded to make sure it is safe.
2. Make sure the stretcher is not dropped when the victim is being carried.

Possible Solution - Jackets are zippered or buttoned and the poles are slid through the sleeves which have been turned inside out. Six people raise the victim while the others slide the stretcher underneath. The stretcher bearers (one at each end, two on each side) all lift together. Those not actively involved in carrying the stretcher walk ahead to scout the trail while waiting to carry the stretcher.

Discussion Afterward 1. How far would you have transported an injured person on the stretcher you constructed?
2. Did you treat the victim gently?
3. What would you do differently if this was a real emergency?

Sounds (grade 3 and above)

Problem - Blindfolded students are each given the name of an animal. Using the sound of that particular animal, students try to form a line with the smallest animal at the front and the largest animal at the rear.

Rules - 1. Students may not talk while blindfolded.
2. Students may not remove blindfolds until told to do so.

Getting Students Ready - Allow students the usual 60 seconds to discuss the problem. Hand out the blindfolds and encourage students to help each other get them on. Take each student aside and assign them an animal. Some possible suggestions for animals are: bee, mouse, frog, sparrow, snake, chicken, crow, rooster, goose, cat, dog, pig, sheet, donkey, bear, cow, elephant.

Safety Precaution - no pushing or shoving will be tolerated.

Discussion Afterward - About 5 minutes before time is called, stop the group even though they may not be finished. Have them remove their blindfolds and remain quiet. Starting at one end of the line point to each person and have them make their sounds. Others in the group guess what animal it is and they discuss whether or not it is in the right place. Interesting dialogue may take place when students begin to realize that a cat or goose may be much larger than a small dog, etc. Other discussions may be evoked by the following questions; Did anyone talk while blindfolded? Should this be taken into account when evaluating the group's performance? Was there a great deal of confusion during the problem? Why?

Trolley (grade 5 and above)

Description - Four rails are placed parallel to each other in an open area.

Equipment - 4 - 8ft. long, 2" x 4" rails with hand ropes attached.

Problem - Divide the group into two sub-groups with an equal number of boys and girls in each sub group. Each sub group will get on a pair of rails and move 30 feet ahead.

Rules - 1. While moving, all students must have one foot on each rail.
2. All ropes must be held off the ground.
3. Sub groups must cross the finish line at the same time.

Possible Solution - Students hold ropes and stand with one foot on each rail. At the command of the leader all students lift their left foot and move the left rail ahead. Then do the same with their right foot.

Discussion Afterward - 1. Is it helpful to choose a leader for this problem?
2. Was there a lot of shouting and arguing? Why?
3. Was one sub group much more efficient than the other? Why?
4. Why do you think there is a rule that both sub groups must cross the finish line at the same time?

Alternate Methods - 1. Move the rails backward -- uphill.
2. Combine the sub groups and do the same problem with three rails.

APPENDIX

RELATIONSHIP OF ACTION SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES TO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

	A.S.E.	Environmental Action
I. Action	A. People doing something, not just talking about it. (After a quick explanation of the task the students - get actively involved.)	Environmental Action means involved citizenry. 1. Writing letters to government officials 2. Recycling
	B. The Action is directed -- there is a goal or purpose. (The task is clearly explained at the start of the session.)	One big problem in environmental action is that people do not understand the consequences of their own actions, e.g., lights left on in every home wastes a tremendous amount of electricity.
II. Teamwork		
	A. People working together realizing that group effort can accomplish more than individuals. (To be successful in an ASE all members of the group must be involved. The experience is designed to get everyone to participate.)	Environmental Action groups work in many ways. 1. Lobbyists 2. Citizens councils 3. Boy Scouts 4. Sierra Club
	B. The group must be effective despite conflict from within and you must learn to work with people you don't like. (There are sure to be differences of opinion, Teamwork involves settling differences and working together.)	Conflicting interests must be forgotten if the ultimate goal is to be reached. 1. Bird watchers & duck hunters 2. Army Corps of Engineers & Sierra Club
III. Problem Solving	A. People are challenged to work out solutions. There are no easy answers. (Once a problem is presented no further information is given. Students have responsibility for decision making.)	Environmental problems have taken a long time to develop and cannot be solved overnight.
	B. All possible alternatives must be considered. (Since the experience is timed students must explore all possibilities to find the answer which provides the most efficient solution to the problem.)	Most environmental problems have been caused by a multiplicity of factors and all must be considered before any action is taken.
	C. To experience failure can be as important as experiencing success for only through failure can we fully realize how difficult it is to attain success. (By failing when trying one method the group must not give up, but instead try an alternative method of solving the problem.)	People involved in Environmental Action often experience failure because they are working against overwhelming odds. 1. Political such as vested interests. 2. Economic - big business

	NO. OF PEOPLE	THE	COMMENTS ON TEAMWORK	TOTAL POINTS 6 - Teamwork 4 = Success
GROUP 1				
GROUP 2				
GROUP 3				
GROUP 4				
GROUP 5				
GROUP 6				
GROUP 7				
GROUP 8				
GROUP 9				
GROUP 10				